

## Module 11

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO CONCEPTS IN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

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THE COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

**General Education Modules**  
**for Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Teachers**  
**of Science, Technology and Mathematics by Distance**  
**in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

Developed by

The Southern African Development Community

Ministries of Education in:

- Botswana
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

In partnership with The Commonwealth of Learning

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## GENERAL EDUCATION MODULES

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This module is one of a series prepared under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and The Commonwealth of Learning as part of the Science, Technology and Mathematics Programme (STAMP 2000+). These General Education modules enable teachers to enhance their professional skills through distance and open learning. Many individuals and groups have been involved in writing and producing these modules. We trust that they will benefit not only the teachers who use them, but also, ultimately, their students and the communities and nations in which they live.

The eighteen General Education modules are as follows:

- Module 1: *Multigrade Teaching: Introduction to Multigrade Teaching*
- Module 2: *Multigrade Teaching: Classroom Organisation and Management*
- Module 3: *The Reading Process*
- Module 4: *Developing Reading Skills*
- Module 5: *Special Educational Needs: An Introduction to Teaching Traumatised Children*
- Module 6: *Special Educational Needs: A Practical Guide to Teaching Traumatised Children*
- Module 7: *Education Management Development: Part A*
- Module 8: *Education Management Development: Part B*
- Module 9: *Child Development*
- Module 10: *Concepts of Learning*
- Module 11: *An Introduction to Concepts in Language and Communication*
- Module 12: *Language and Communication: Language in Use*
- Module 13: *Curriculum Theory, Design and Assessment*
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- Module 16: *Effects of Social Changes on Education*
- Module 17: *Comparative Education: Introduction to Key Concepts in Comparative Education*
- Module 18: *Comparative Education: Themes and Trends in Comparative Education in SADC Countries*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

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Upper Primary Technology
- Hands-on Management Services (British Columbia, Canada):  
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## Module 11

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO CONCEPTS IN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

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## AN INTRODUCTION TO CONCEPTS IN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

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This is one of a series of modules in the General Education courses developed by Ministries of Education in the SADC region in cooperation with the Commonwealth of Learning.

Language is an important element in communication. The aim of this module is to expose teachers to the broad area of language and communication so that they can better help their students to communicate effectively.

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## LEARNING TIPS

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You will find the following tips helpful as you study this module.

- **Set aside some time each day to work on this module.** If possible, study at the same time and in the same place so you are comfortable with your study surroundings. Learning at a distance requires discipline and motivation.
- **Go through the module unit by unit.**
- **Note any words you do not understand.** Look them up in a dictionary or other reference source or discuss them with your colleagues.
- **Underline or highlight important passages.** Make summary notes in the margins of long passages. Writing will help you to remember the material. You may also choose to make diagrams that illustrate how different ideas are related or list the steps in a procedure or technique.
- As you work through this module, **keep in mind your learners and their educational needs** as well as your instructional goals and your subject matter. How will you apply what you are learning?
- Read the assignment instructions carefully. Then, **do all the self-assessment activities** before proceeding to the Suggested Answers section.
- **As you undertake each activity, relate it to the practice of teaching** and analyse how it will help you to enhance the teaching-learning situation. Always ask yourself how you could use this material.
- **Apply some of the suggested techniques to your teaching.** All suggestions may not be appropriate for your situation, but how will you know unless you try them? Keep a record of what techniques work and an explanation of why some techniques appeared to fail. What does not work now may work later with different students.
- It may be difficult, but try to **meet occasionally with other teachers** to discuss the content and application of suggestions provided in this module.
- If you experience difficulty in understanding some aspect of the module, do not despair! You are meant to be challenged. **Do not give up!** Just remember that your goal is to be the best teacher that you can be. Think of what you would tell a student who was experiencing difficulty in your classroom. Then, apply the same advice to yourself.

## ICONS

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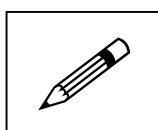
Throughout each module, you will find the following icons or graphic symbols that alert you to a change in activity within the module. Only the icons that are required are used in each module.



**Text or Reading Material:** provides information about the topics that are covered in a module. The subject matter for each SADC module is organised into units.



**Introductory Activity:** requires you to focus on the content that will be discussed in a unit.



**Self-Assessment:** enables you to check your understanding of what you have read and, in some cases, to apply the information presented in the unit to new situations.



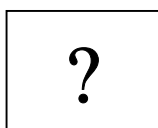
**Practice Activity:** encourages you to review and apply what you have learned before taking a unit test.



**Reflection:** asks you to relate what you have learned to your work as a teacher or education officer in your community.



**Summary:** highlights or provides an overview of the most important points covered in a unit.



**Unit Test:** concludes each unit.



**Suggested Answers:** allow you to evaluate your learning by providing sample answers to assessments, activities, and the unit test.

# UNIT 1: Language and Communication

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## Introduction

In this unit, the first in a series of sixteen units that will be covered in Modules 11 and 12, you will be introduced to the important field of language and communication. Language plays a significant role in communication in our everyday life. We use different forms of language to communicate with our students, colleagues at work and the general public.

In this module, you will have the opportunity to discuss different aspects of language and communication and explore the relationship between language and communication. This relationship is important to you as a classroom teacher because the nature of your job demands that you maintain a considerable degree of communication skills.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define language.
2. Define communication.
3. Explain the relationship between language and communication.

## Language

What is language?

Different people have defined language in a number of ways. The following are some of the definitions:

An expression of ideas by means of speech sounds combined into words. (Sweet, 1992: 566)

The basic instrument by which throughout the ages people have communicated with their fellow human beings. (van Schalkwyk, 1992: 11)

The ability to communicate information, feelings, instructions and requests. (Sesman, 1997: 14)

The above quotations define language in terms of its functions (communication) and structure (combination of sounds to form words).

They also show that language is:

- an expression of ideas using words, and
- an instrument for communicating information.

## Communication

We have looked at the concept of language. Now let us consider communication.

Different writers have defined 'communication' in different ways. This section presents some of the definitions for the purpose of discussion. It is important to note that these are not the only definitions.

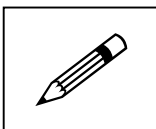
Study the following definitions and compare them with your own understanding of communication.

Communication is the transmission of information and understanding from one person to another through the use of common symbols. (Plunkett, 1979: 47)

Communication in its broadest sense can be seen as the two-way process by which information is conveyed or transmitted from a communication source to a receiver, who in turn reacts to this stimulus. (van Schalkwyk, 1992: 3)

From the definitions quoted above, **communication** involves, among other things:

- information,
- source of information (sender),
- transmission (sending),
- receiver,
- understanding by the receiver,
- common symbols, and
- reaction.



### Self-Assessment 1

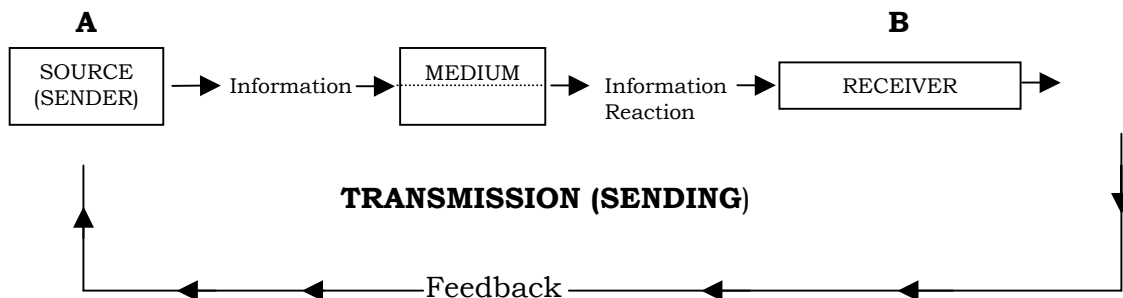
Give your own definition of language.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



### **The Communication Process**

The communication process can be illustrated as follows:



The reaction by the receiver may be sent to the sender as feedback or may lead to an action by the receiver or both the receiver and the sender.

The medium used to transmit information from A to B can be:

- words,
- actions,
- pictures, and/or
- numbers.



### **Self-Assessment 2**

Using the knowledge you have gained so far, explain the relationship between language and communication.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



### **Practice Activity**

Look at the definition of communication given below:

The exchange of information and transmission of meaning; “both shooting information and hitting the target with it”.  
(Dessler, 1978)

Using the information learned in this unit, state the strengths and weaknesses of this definition.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Summary

This unit has introduced you to the concepts of language and communication. The aim was to give you the opportunity to see the relationship between language and communication.

Language could be defined as an expression of ideas using words or other symbols. Communication is a two-way process that transmits information. This information is coded in a language. Various definitions for language and communication were provided in the unit.



## Reflection

How does your understanding of language and communication help you to relate with both your students and colleagues?



## Unit Test

Imagine that you instructed your class to form groups in order to perform an activity. When they get to their groups, they do nothing. What do you think could have led to this situation? How could you improve it?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## **Suggested Answers**

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### **Self-Assessment 1**

Your definition of language may include the following:

- expression of ideas using words
- instrument of communities
- ability to communicate information
- combination of sounds that form words which have meaning.

### **Self-Assessment 2**

In your explanation of the relationship between language and communication, you have included the following points:

- Language is the medium of transmission of information.
- Communication is the process of sending information from the source to the receiver.
- Language is the vehicle through which information is passed from one person to another.
- The common element in language and communication is information.

### **Practice Activity**

The strengths of the definition are outlined below.

- Talks about the exchange of information.
- Focuses on information.
- Transmission or sending of information is included in the definition.
- Information is getting to (hitting) the receiver (target).

Possible weaknesses of the definition are identified below.

- It does not mention the medium of transmission.
- It is not clear whether the receiver understands the message. The target got the information, but did the target understand it?

### **Unit Test**

The pupils may have done nothing in their groups because:

- the instructions were not clear,
- the instructions were not heard by all pupils, or
- the activity was too difficult.



In order to improve the situation, one could follow the suggestions below.

- Give clear instructions.
- Use language that is easy to understand.
- Make sure that students are attentive before giving instructions.

# UNIT 2: The Role of Language in Communication

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## Introduction

This unit discusses the role that language plays in communication. It will also give you an idea of the difference between spoken and written language in communication. Language plays an important part in communication, especially in the area of verbal communication, where language is used mainly to convey information. Consider the following quotation about the role of language in communication.

The emphasis...has been on message accuracy, comprehensibility and validity, and it has stressed the importance of such mediating processes as attention, verbal and perceptual comparison, comprehension retention and role taking. (Fondacaro and Higgins in Olson et al., 1993: 74)

From the above quotation, we can conclude that the key components in language as used in communication are:

- message accuracy
- comprehensibility (can be understood)
- validity (can be justified)
- attention
- verbal comparison
- perceptual comparison (common understanding)
- retention (remembering)
- role-taking (turn-taking)

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the importance of language in communication.
2. List components of language that are important for successful communication.
3. State the difference between spoken and written language in communication.
4. Explain features important in conveying information through language.

## Characteristics of Spoken and Written Language

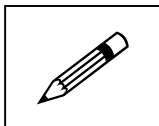
It is important to note that there is a difference between the transmission of information through speech and the transmission of information in writing. Consider the differences by looking at the following characteristics of each.

**Spoken language** has the following characteristics. Spoken language:

- is done speedily,
- is of fragmented quality,
- is informal,
- involves social interaction,
- involves phrasing and rephrasing,
- is spontaneous or unplanned,
- includes hesitations,
- includes pauses, and
- requires listener attention.

**Written language**, on the other hand, is:

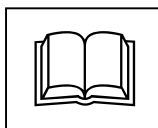
- slow, composing the message takes time;
- deliberate, the message is planned;
- an editable process, the message can be refined before transmission;
- integrated, as it involves different stages of the writing process such as planning, drafting and editing;
- formal, making it easy to follow what is written;
- prepared by the sender alone;
- detached, as there is no immediate verbal exchange with the receiver; and
- mechanically constrained because no matter how fast one writes, he or she cannot match the speed of speaking.



### Self-Assessment 1

From your experience as a teacher, what would you say are the advantages of receiving a spoken message as opposed to receiving a written one?

Possible answers to this activity are given at the end of this unit.



## Features of Language in Conveying Information

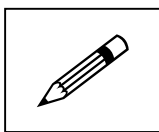
Morrow, cited in Brumfit & Johnson (1982: 149), states, “Language is interactive, unpredictable, purposive, authentic, contextualised, based on performance and assessed in terms of behavioural outcomes.” What does he mean by these descriptions?

The seven features are explained below.

Our communications will be most effective when we are aware of these characteristics of language:

- **Interaction-based.** We do not receive language or messages passively. We take in what we receive and in order to understand it, we reconstruct it. In working out the messages that we receive, we are restricted by certain rules that have to be followed to communicate effectively with those around us. Effective communication has taken place if the receiver has made some response. Communication through language means a two-way flow of information.
- **Unpredictability.** When we communicate information, we cannot be sure how the receiver is going to respond. In other words, responses depend on how the listener interprets the message. The receiver’s reaction can be positive, negative or neutral.
- **Context.** Different contexts call for different types of language. The language that we use when writing a formal letter differs from the language used to write to a friend. Language used in an official meeting will differ from language used in casual conversation. In conveying information, the sender selects language appropriate for the environment and the status of the receiver.
- **Purpose.** One major objective of teaching language is to enable children to give and receive information clearly and receive and interpret it accurately. For example, if you ask a student to close the windows of the classroom and the student carries out your request, the purpose of communication has been achieved.
- **Performance.** This feature of language in communication suggests that the language that the receiver produces to convey information does not have to be perfect. What is important is for the message to get through to the receiver, whether it is through pauses, phrasing and rephrasing utterances or writing and recording the message.
- **Authenticity.** Language classroom exercises should be interactive and reflect the realities of learners’ daily lives.
- **Behaviour-based.** The success or failure of an interaction is judged by its participants on the basis of behavioural

outcomes. For example, if a teacher asks all the students to stand up, the communication is successful if students actually stand up until they are told to sit down.



### **Self-Assessment 2**

State the characteristics that distinguish written language from spoken language.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



### **Practice Activity**

You received a letter that says you have been awarded a scholarship to go for further studies. The letter does not have the address of the sender and is not signed. Given the insights gained from this unit, how would you feel about the letter?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



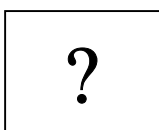
### **Reflection**

Think of how the seven features of language communication influence your teaching.



### **Summary**

This unit introduced a number of important concepts concerning the role of language in communication. These concepts include key components of language as used in communication, the difference between spoken and written language communication and seven features of language that are important in communication. We hope that whenever you use language to convey information, you will keep these features in mind.



### **Unit Test**

What key features of language would you consider when preparing a message to be sent to some of your colleagues at school?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.



## Suggested Answers

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### Self-Assessment 1

Please note that answers to this activity will vary, depending on your experience as a teacher.

The advantages of receiving a spoken message instead of a written message are as follows:

- It is easier to determine the tone and the emotions behind a spoken message.
- The receiver can ask for clarifications as the message is being sent.
- The receiver can provide immediate feedback.
- The receiver can have the attention of the sender.

### Self-Assessment 2

In citing the characteristics that distinguish written language from spoken language, you may have identified the following points in your answer:

- the speed of communication
- its informal and formal qualities
- possibility for concurrent or immediate interaction
- spontaneity
- the amount of planning that is required
- the need for refinement
- the involvement of the receiver
- the delay in receiving feedback.

### Practice Activity

In your response to receiving an unsigned scholarship letter, you may have considered the following:

- It was sent to annoy you.
- It was not an official document.
- It was just a practical joke.
- It was a useless document.
- The people who sent it to you were careless.

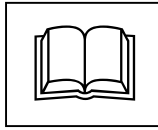
### Unit Test

In citing the seven important features of language communication that you would consider as you prepare a message to be sent to your colleagues at school, you may have listed the following:

- interactivity
- unpredictability
- context
- purpose
- performance
- authenticity
- behavioural outcomes expected.

# UNIT 3: Types of Communication

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## Introduction

In the first two units of this module, you studied the concepts of language and communication and the role of language in communication. This unit further develops those concepts by examining the types of communication. This unit covers:

- verbal and non-verbal communication,
- written communication,
- internal communication, and
- external communication.

As you go through the unit, you will realise that these various types of communication complement and reinforce one another in order to make communication effective. However, each type shall be treated separately for the sake of clarity.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Identify the types of communication in any given situation.
2. State the strengths and weaknesses of each type of communication.
3. Identify suitable types of communication for use in your work situation.

## Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is a way of transmitting messages in words, for example, when talking to your class. Verbal communication includes the following elements:

- source of information
- message
- medium of communication
- receiver
- feedback.

There are many examples of verbal communication. Can you think of any? Here are some of them:

- discussions
- lectures and seminars
- class debates



- interviews
- conversations.

## **Written Communication**

Written communication is a type of verbal communication, but the message is transmitted in writing. Written communication includes electronic communications by fax, telex and newspapers. Examples of written communication are a memo from your head or a circular from your Education Officer.

Written communication has a number of advantages, some of which are listed below.

- It is formal.
- It can be well-prepared, structured and edited.
- It avoids personal contact in awkward situations, for example, discharging someone from service.
- It is easier for nervous persons.
- It is easier for persons with speech problems, for example, stammering.
- Messages reach the recipients with minimal interference.

## **Non-Verbal Communication**

Non-verbal communication is the sending of messages or information without the use of words. Communicating is more than just producing sounds and sending words. Samovar and Mills (1976: 12) note that:

To communicate is to do more than just sending words. To communicate is to adapt your whole personality to the effort of arousing certain thoughts and feelings in the mind of another.

As already stated in the introduction to this unit, non-verbal communication reinforces verbal communication. In order to arouse thoughts and feelings, non-verbal communication makes use of body language. Among other things, body language involves the use of:

- facial expression and eye contact,
- gestures,
- voice,
- mannerisms, and
- dress.

We shall now discuss some of the above elements in order to show how they reinforce verbal communication.

### **Facial Expression and Eye Contact**

Facial expression and eye contact can show happiness, sadness, disgust, fear or interest. They can also reveal personality and attitudes towards others.

Eye contact has an important role in communication. It can convey a message emphatically if properly and appropriately used, hence the expression 'talking eye'. The following are some of the uses of eye contact in non-verbal communication:

- seeking information
- showing attention and interest
- inviting and controlling interaction
- dominating, threatening and influencing others
- providing feedback during speech
- revealing attitudes.

A communicator needs to use eye contact carefully because the inappropriate use of eye contact may have negative effects. Argyle et al. (1972) conducted studies on the use of eye contact and made the following observations:

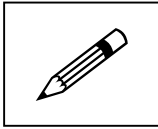
- Too much eye contact is generally regarded as communicating superiority, or a threatening attitude.
- Too little eye contact can be interpreted as a sign of inattention, rudeness or dishonesty.
- Withdrawing eye contact by lowering the eyes is usually taken as a signal of submission.
- People will communicate more frequently if their interaction contains the amount of eye contact they both find appropriate to the situation.

The above interpretation of the message conveyed by eyes is culturally specific. In many Asian countries, direct eye contact between individuals who are deemed to be at different social levels can be frowned upon.

### **Gestures**

These help to emphasise a point. They contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication. However, inappropriate gestures can distort the communication. Some gestures and body movements can develop into habits that distract the attention of the audience. The communicator should avoid:

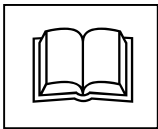
- exaggerated and meaningless movements,
- forced mechanical movements, and
- unnatural stiffness.



## Self-Assessment 1

Imagine that you were on duty at your school one Friday afternoon. You were supposed to assemble the students and make some important announcements before dismissal. You rang the bell, but pupils did not come quickly. Those who came to the assembly point continued to make a lot of noise and were disorderly. The head of the school came to the assembly point and silently looked at the students for a short while. In a moment, there was absolute silence and order. The head then left you to continue. What message do you think the head conveyed through the silent look?

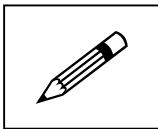
Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## The Voice

The voice is an important element in communication. As you talk, you should know when to lower or raise your voice. The following aspects of changing the voice will make your communication more effective:

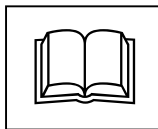
- volume: speaking or projecting your voice loudly enough to be heard
- pitch: highness or lowness of voice
- tone: reveals your attitudes and feelings
- tempo and rhythm: the rate at which you speak, including pauses, for example, where there are punctuation marks such as full stops or commas.



## Self-Assessment 2

Imagine that you have been given a topic to present at a workshop. What types of communication would you use and how would you make the presentation effective?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Communication within an Organisation

### Internal Communications

Internal communication refers to the communication that takes place within an organisation. In a private organisation, it takes place when employees communicate among themselves or with management. In a school, internal communication takes place when:

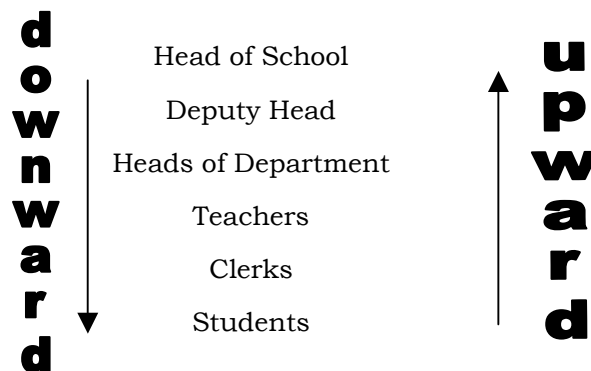
- students communicate among themselves,
- members of a department discuss issues,
- the head of the school communicates to staff members,

- students communicate with teachers and vice versa, and
- students communicate with the head.

Internal communication in an organisation takes place:

- vertically (downward and upward),
- horizontally (laterally), and
- diagonally.

**Vertical Communication.** Vertical communication at a school can be illustrated by the diagram below:



Adapted from Jacobson (1978: 6).

In the above diagram, vertical downward communication takes place when the head of the school sends information to teachers by means of memoranda, notices and announcements.

Vertical upward communication occurs, for example, when teachers or students give the head feedback. The flow of information will be going up the organisational hierarchy.

Vertical communication has a number of functions in an organisation. When a head sends information through vertical downward communication, the following are some of the purposes:

- conveying orders and policies
- providing information
- giving instruction
- supplying feedback
- changing and improving staff attitudes.

Vertical upward communication serves to:

- supply feedback to superiors,
- discuss personal and performance problems,

- give opinions about organisational practices and procedures,
- suggest possible changes, or
- make a complaint.

**Horizontal Communication.** Horizontal communication takes place between members of staff or workers with the same status in an organisation. In a school situation, this can be among students and among teachers.

**Diagonal Communication.** Diagonal communication takes place when workers on different levels of the same organisation interact with workers in another department. This usually happens in private organisations where expertise from one department may be needed in another. This type of communication is not very common in a school situation.

### **External Communication**

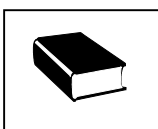
External communication takes place when an organisation interacts with the public and other organisations. A private organisation can communicate with the public through advertisement, letters and circulars. A school or college has external communication with parents, responsible authorities, non-governmental organisations and the public in general.



### **Practice Activity**

Describe the internal communication that takes place at your school. If the current communications practices are unsatisfactory, suggest ways of improving the situation.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



### **Summary**

In this unit, you learned about various types of communication: verbal, non-verbal, internal and external. The discussion on the types of communication drew examples from different work situations. This was meant to make these types of communication relevant to your own experiences. We hope that as you went through the unit, you were able to draw parallels with your situation at work and devise ways of improving it, if necessary.



### **Reflection**

Think about all the types of communication discussed in this unit and judge your effectiveness as a communicator. Suggest how you can improve your own communication skills.

A square box containing a large black question mark.

### **Unit Test**

What are the main features of oral and written communication?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.



## Suggested Answers

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### Self-Assessment 1

The head, through his silent look, may have conveyed any of the messages below.

- The head wanted the students to be quiet.
- He disapproved of the noise and disorderly behaviour.
- It was a warning to students.
- The head showed his authority.
- The head was a strict disciplinarian.
- Students feared him.
- He was a no-nonsense head.
- The head also cautioned the teacher by merely looking at him or her.

### Self-Assessment 2

The types of communication that would be considered are:

- written communication, including the speech and workshop notes;
- verbal communication; and
- non-verbal communication.

The presentation can be made effective by:

- using eye contact appropriately;
- projecting the voice, and varying the tone, pitch, tempo and rhythm;
- using appropriate gestures;
- using facial expressions effectively; and
- dressing appropriately.

### Practice Activity

Situations differ from school to school. However, you may consider the following forms of internal communication.

Vertical downward

- head to staff through memos and circulars
- head to students, for example, at assembly
- head to heads of department

### Vertical upward

- teachers to head
- clerical staff to head or deputy
- students to head through prefects
- horizontal
- students to students
- teacher to teacher

### Suggestions for improving the internal communication:

- Communicate frequently.
- Keep people informed.
- Give feedback promptly.
- Give people a chance to discuss and debate issues.
- Ensure that those at the top are accessible and capable of accepting constructive criticism.

## Unit Test

The main features of oral and written communication are listed below.

### Oral Communication

- The communicator must keep the message in mind.
- The communicator must be competent to speak.
- Oral communication can be less formal than other forms of communication.
- Non-verbal factors such as facial expression and gestures can be used.
- The communicator can adjust to control the rate of understanding.
- There is instant feedback.
- Noise factors may interfere with the message.
- Decision-making occurs more quickly when oral communication is used instead of verbal communication.

### Written Communication

- Personal presence is not required.
- Messages can reach their target in a variety of ways, for example, letters, circulars and newsletters.
- It is easier for nervous persons to use written communication.



- It is frequently more formal and authoritative than oral communication.
- Language can be corrected, as the written form can be edited.
- The noise factor is less than in oral communication.
- Written communication provides a permanent record.
- Written communication usually takes a longer time to reach the recipient than oral communication, but modern equipment such as fax, telex and electronic mail can speed up the communication.
- Feedback may be delayed.

# UNIT 4: Purposes of Communication

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## Introduction

The concept of communication that was discussed in previous units has established that communication is more than one person speaking and another listening. This unit looks at why we communicate. Whenever you send a message, you must have a specific goal in mind. You must also make sure that the message you are sending is clear enough to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the purpose of communication.
2. Establish the relationship between the types and purposes of communication.
3. Discuss the differences between types of messages.
4. Relate the purposes of communication to your experiences within and outside of the work place.

## Reasons for Communicating

We communicate in order to accomplish the following goals:

- Transmit information, ideas and concepts from person to person so that cooperative action can take place.
- Motivate and direct people to perform an activity.
- Help shape attitudes and beliefs.
- Persuade, convince and influence behaviour.
- Orient individuals to their physical and social environment.
- Entertain and maintain relations among individuals.

Communication, therefore, is generally intended to change or reinforce knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

In order to communicate effectively, we have to understand how people behave as individuals or in groups. As a speaker, you are able to convey your emotional attitudes and feelings towards:

- persons you are addressing, and
- the subject matter.

Non-verbal communication (refer to Unit 3) plays an important role in supporting or contradicting what you say. It must

therefore be taken into account when establishing the purpose of communication.

## Types of Messages

For successful communication to occur, you must have a clear purpose. Although the purposes of speech often overlap, you must decide if you intend to inform, persuade or entertain. Sometimes, you may find it difficult to make a clear distinction between messages because the intended purpose will depend on the context and, to some extent, how the information is presented.

There are three different purposes of communication—information, persuasion and entertainment. Each is discussed below.

### **Informative Messages**

Book (1990: 73) defines the word ‘informative’ in the following manner.

Informative: seeks to transmit information accurately without specifying what use the receiver should make of that information. For example, his father is a lawyer.

Informative messages may be in the form of requests, questions, commands or statements.

In an informative message, you learn some information. What you do with it may not be important. You may react to the message differently than the sender intended. You have the flexibility of deciding what messages to select and take note of. For example, when reading a newspaper article, you select information that is important to you and leave the rest.

The sender has an important role to play because the goal is to successfully transmit information. This information must be presented in a way that holds the attention of the receiver. The message must be well understood by the receiver for it to be successful. In presenting the information, the sender must therefore aim for clarity and accuracy.

Information messages may take different forms, some of which are:

- instructions, for example, a coach explaining a strategy or a particular play to her team;
- reports, for example, a teacher giving feedback to colleagues after attending a workshop;
- demonstrations, for example, a first-aid teacher showing students how to attend to emergency cases; and

- lectures, for example, a teacher explaining a concept to students.

One goal of informative messages is to facilitate audience learning. Some of the strategies that increase this learning are:

- motivating the audience,
- organising ideas so that information is logical and easy to follow,
- developing ideas effectively to sustain learners' attention,
- emphasising the important points through repetition,
- using visual aids such as graphs and pictures to reinforce the presentation, and
- allowing receivers to participate in the exchange of information.

### **Persuasive Messages**

Persuasive messages try to change or maintain a particular attitude or behaviour of the receiver. Examples of this type of message include a politician convincing you to vote for his or her party, or the school head convincing you to take students on an educational trip during the vacation.

The purpose of a persuasive message is to influence the receiver's behaviour or way of thinking. Persuasion is "a tool that can be used for both good and evil" (Barker and Gant, 1996: 231). The degree to which an audience is persuaded will vary. For example, a speaker who intends to persuade will:

- Convince by getting the audience to think, believe or feel in a certain way.
- Stimulate by reaffirming or strengthening beliefs or feelings that already exist.
- Move the audience to action, for example, boycotting a given activity.

Every argumentative or persuasive message has a proposition. Book et al. (1980: 76) define a **proposition** as "what a source wants a receiver to do as the result of attending to the messages". The message may or may not be explicitly stated. Consider the following statements:

- a. Would you mind completing these records by tomorrow? (implicit)
- b. Complete these records by tomorrow! (explicit)

In both situations, the speaker would like the receiver to act but is saying the same thing in different ways. Statement (a) is not as explicit as (b). Do you think the intended outcome will be the same?

It is very important for the speaker to have a clear understanding of the desired outcomes and to expect the receiver to respond in a particular way.

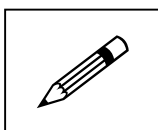
If the speaker justifies to the receiver why a particular response is expected, the receiver is likely to respond accordingly. This appeal or justification must therefore be made an essential part of the message. An **appeal/justification** may either be:

- Rational: the receiver is convinced to accept the proposition.
- Motivational: the source seeks to stimulate the receiver to accept a proposition by linking it to one or more biological drives or learned motives of the receiver. Take, for example, a politician who is persuading people to vote for her. She may promise her potential voters something in return.

### **Informative vs. Persuasive Messages**

Look at how the two types of messages differ.

	<b><i>Persuasive</i></b>	<b><i>Informative</i></b>
Climate	An atmosphere may be hostile or inspiring.	The relationship between the speaker and the receiver is neutral.
Response	Higher degree of involvement or action by both the speaker and receiver.	Less involvement or action by both the speaker and receiver.
Goals achieved	To change an attitude or belief or to bring about some form of action.	To present receivers with new useful information from which it is hoped they will understand and learn.



### **Self-Assessment 1**

Using the information you have gained so far, can you think of situations in which either persuasive or informative messages can be used in your school?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.



### **Entertainment**

Entertainment messages are intended to bring pleasure to the audience. The messages are more informal than those intended to inform or persuade. The following are some guidelines for creating and delivering effective entertainment messages:

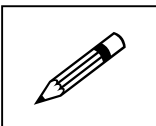
- Use humour appropriately. Do not distract the audience.
- Have a central theme. Know the purpose and relate that to your message.
- Be clear and brief.

It is important to note that messages are sent with an intention or for the purpose of eliciting various responses from the receivers. However, it may sometimes be difficult for you as the receiver to make a distinction between the various types because the intentions may overlap.



## Reflection

Now that you have completed this unit, you probably realise how important it is to know the purpose of communication. Consider your school environment. How do your colleagues relate with each other and the community in which they work? Do you think that they are aware of how important it is to know the purpose of communication? If not, how would you improve the situation?



## Self-Assessment 2

Study examples A and B below. State the purposes of communication for each and give reasons for your answer.

### A. Your Body's Many Cries for Water

Dehydration is the root cause of major degenerative diseases... water is the hero. 'In the same way we have a hunger pain signal, we also have a thirst pain signal in the body. The human body has many different indicators when it runs short of water'.

Water is the cheapest form of medicine for the dehydrated body and is nothing more than good old-fashioned common sense. Chronic dehydration is the root cause of many currently encountered diseases in the body. Water is a solvent that regulates the functions of the body. The disturbances in water 'levels' in the body produce a variety of signals that could be 'silenced' by medication. Some of these signals may include: headaches, rheumatoid arthritis pain, neck pain, anginal pain, low back pain, hypertension, depression, dyspeptic pain, asthma and allergies and high blood cholesterol.

At a certain threshold of dehydration, when the body urgently calls for water, nothing else can be a substitute. No medication other than water is effective.

In a nutshell, the simple and fundamental solution to good health is water. Without sufficient water, you may become dehydrated.

The simple truth is that dehydration causes disease. Everyone knows water is 'good' for you, but no one seems to know how essential it is for your well-being or what happens when the body does not receive its daily requirement of water.

Source: Agriforum, supplement to *The Botswana Guardian*, August 20, 1999.

## **B. SAVINGRAM**

**FROM:** Director  
Dept of Vocational Education and Training  
.....  
B. J. Moepi  
for /  
Director

**TEL:** 3655000

**TO:      Principals:**  
VTC's  
ATTS

**REF:** VE 13/9 II (60)      27<sup>th</sup> October 1998

### **Re: VTC TERM DATES 1999**

The following are the term dates for VTCs for 1999.

#### **TERM 1**

11<sup>th</sup> January

16<sup>th</sup> April

#### **TERM 2**

10<sup>th</sup> May

6<sup>th</sup> August

#### **TERM 3**

6<sup>th</sup> September

3<sup>rd</sup> December

Note that:

- 1) Closing and opening days of each term are obligatory and must be strictly adhered to by all VTC's.
- 2) Teaching staff are required to report 2 days before the commencement of term.

Thank you.

Possible answers are provided at the end of this unit.



### Practice Activity

Think of an occasion when you observed a colleague making a presentation. Use that experience to answer the following questions.

- What was the purpose of the communication?
- What outcome or response did you expect or anticipate?
- What did the audience do to show that they were listening?
- Would you rate this as a successful communication?
- What do you think were the reasons for the success or failure in communication?
- How would you improve on it?

Possible answers are provided at the end of this unit.



### Summary

This unit has introduced you to the purposes of communication—to inform, persuade and entertain. It has also outlined the similarities and differences among these different forms. We hope that this information will help you in your professional development and in your classroom preparation.



### Unit Test

The school head has informed all members of staff that the financial budget for the academic year is very tight. However, in your departmental meeting, it was decided that the department desperately needs a reference library for both teachers and students because the school library is not well stocked.

You have been asked to write a letter to the school head requesting funds to buy books for the departmental library.

What factors will you consider when writing this letter?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.





## Suggested Answers

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### Self-Assessment 1

The table below includes possible situations in which persuasive and informative messages may be used.

<i><b>Persuasive</b></i>	<i><b>Informative</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school head convinces teachers to adopt policies.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A teacher gives students information on safety precautions in a science laboratory.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school head convinces teachers to make some changes to the curriculum.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The deputy head makes an announcement regarding the beginning of term arrangements.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A teacher highlights the importance of a particular option with the view to getting students to choose that option.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A student tells her teacher about an incident that happened on the way to school.</li></ul>

### Self-Assessment 2

Both examples are examples of informative messages. The readers of example A may or may not use the information, while the information in example B is extremely important to teachers and students.

### Practice Activity

There are a variety of possible answers for this activity. However, the example below may be helpful.

- The presentation may be informative or persuasive.
- You probably expected that the participants would get information and decide whether to use it or not.

#### Strengths of Presentation

- The ideas were well organised and presented.
- The development of ideas was from known to unknown and therefore the receivers' attention was captured.
- The main points were clear and emphasised.
- Visual aids were used to reinforce the verbal message.
- The audience was involved in the discussion and therefore motivated.

### Weaknesses of Presentation

- Participants were not involved.
- The speaker's voice was too low.
- The speaker spoke above or below the educational level of the audience and did not motivate the listeners.
- The purpose was not clear to both the speaker and the audience.
- The content of the workshop was too abstract for the participants.
- The speaker did not use a variety of methods or types of communication and therefore did not appeal to the differences in the audiences.

### Recommendations for Improvement

- Vary methods by using visuals and both non-verbal and verbal communication to emphasise points.
- Have a clear purpose and a clear understanding of the outcome.
- Know your audience.
- Be clear and accurate in the presentation.

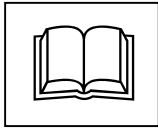
### Unit Test

Factors that should be included in writing the letter are:

- purpose of writing this persuasive and informative letter
- the expected outcome
- the language used, especially its clarity and accuracy
- the audience.

# UNIT 5: Models of Communication

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## Introduction

In this unit, we will discuss three models of communication. These are the intrapersonal, the interpersonal and the mass communication models. You shall also learn that the three models are related. Each model will be treated separately in order to enable you to follow the discussion. The overall aim of this unit is to help you develop a better understanding of the communication concept that was introduced in Unit 1.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define each of the models of communication.
2. State the characteristics of each of the models.
3. Identify the model used in any communication situation.

## Communication Models

In Unit 1, we discussed the communication process that starts with the communicator, as the source of information, sending the information to the recipient. The information is sent by using various common symbols. These form the medium of communication.

The three communication models that we are going to discuss in this unit work much in the same way as the communication process.

## The Interpersonal Communication Model

There are two perspectives of the interpersonal communication model: situational and developmental.

The **situational perspective** considers the number of people involved, their physical distance from each other and the potential for feedback. As Reardon (1987: 9) puts it:

Interpersonal communication, from a situational perspective, is face-to-face interaction between two or several persons with the potential for immediate rather than delayed feedback, as in the case of letters.

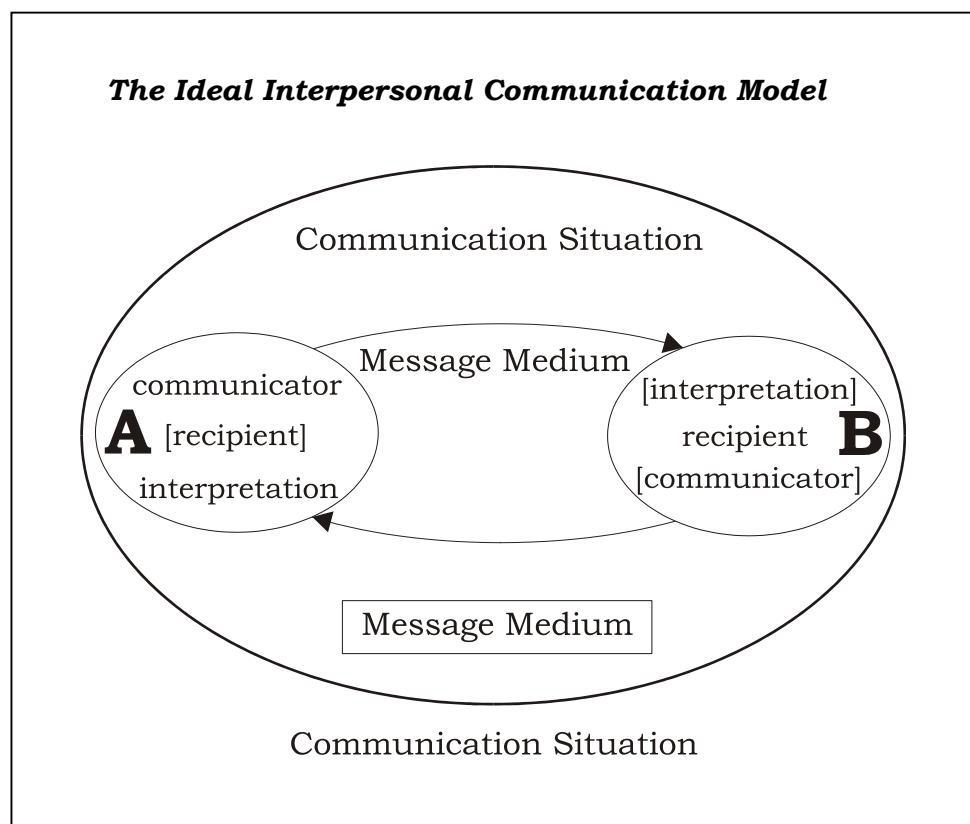
The **development perspective** of interpersonal communication, on the other hand, treats interpersonal communication as dynamic. Miller and Steinberg (1975) argue that:

- Interpersonal communication develops as people get to know each other.
- Communication between strangers is less interpersonal than communication between friends.

The development perspective of interpersonal communication has some disadvantages:

- It is not easy to tell as observers when two or more people know each other personally.
- It is difficult to tell when a particular interaction has become personal.

An ideal interpersonal communication model combines the situational and developmental perspectives. The diagram below illustrates the ideal interpersonal communication model.



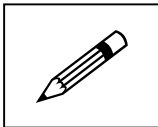
Source: Hove, C.

In this model, the communicator and recipient change roles. For example, A is the communicator when he or she sends a message to B, who is the recipient. Roles change when B gives feedback and becomes the communicator and A becomes the recipient. You can experience this communication model when you discuss something with one of your students.

There are many other situations at work and outside your place of work where you can be involved in interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication has the following characteristics:

- It involves personal feedback, interaction and coherence.
- It is developmental and not static.
- It involves verbal and non-verbal behaviour.
- It is an activity.
- It may involve persuasion.
- It involves scripted or spontaneous behaviour or a combination of both.



### Self-Assessment 1

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the interpersonal communication model?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.

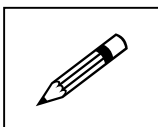


### The Intrapersonal Communication Model

The process in the intrapersonal communication model is similar to that in the interpersonal communication model except that it happens within one person's mind. In this model, the communicator is also the recipient and gives feedback to himself or herself. It involves ideas that are generated and received within oneself, for example, thinking and debating within one's mind.

According to Barker and Gant (1978), **intrapersonal** communication takes place whenever we evaluate and react to internal and external stimuli. The stimuli are the elements that set the process in motion. It is more than talking to yourself. The messages in intrapersonal communication reflect your physical, emotional, intellectual and social self.

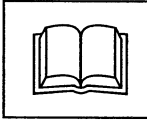
Intrapersonal communication takes place almost every minute in our lives. Imagine yourself preparing a lesson for the next day. In that process you communicate with yourself and make a decision on the topic, suitable methodology, activities and teaching aids. That whole process through which you select the approaches and activities is intrapersonal communication.



### Self-Assessment 2

1. Is interpersonal or intrapersonal communication more observable?
2. Imagine that one of the students in your class has returned from the funeral of a close relative. How might you know that the student is going through intrapersonal communication?

Possible answers to this activity are given at the end of this unit.



## The Mass Communication Model

The mass communication model is also about transmitting information or messages to recipients. The following definitions will help you to understand mass communication.

Process by which messages are transmitted rapidly and inexpensively through a mechanical device to a large, diverse audience. (Barker and Gant, 1996: 405)

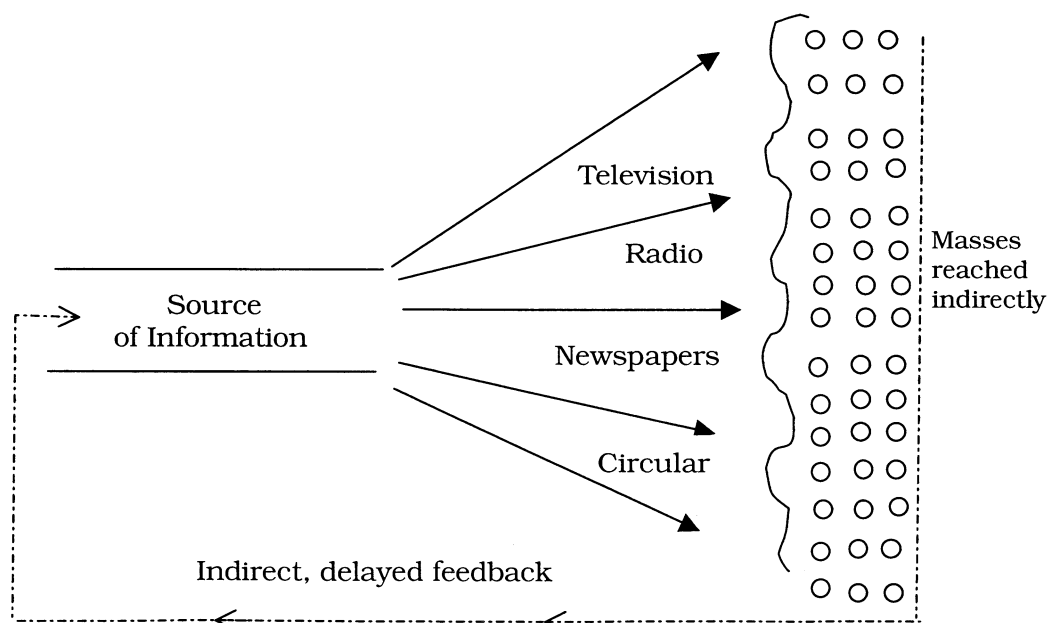
Mass communication can be said to cover messages sent to large, public, dissimilar, distant audiences, using some form of transmission. It makes use of electronic and printed media. (van Schalkwyk, 1992: 29)

These definitions show that in mass communication:

- There is a common source of information.
- The audience is large.
- The audience is diverse.
- Feedback is limited and delayed.
- The communicator has no face-to-face interaction with the audience.
- The recipients (audience) are at different places.

### **Model of Mass Communications**

Below is an example of a mass communication model:



Source: van Schalkwyk, H. (1992: 30). *Language Communication: English*. Johannesburg: Lexicon Publishers.

Mass communication involves the electronic and printed media such as newspapers, radio, television, magazines, pamphlets, circulars, bulletins, brochures, computers, Internet, telex, fax, telephones and similar materials and devices. Mass communication serves a number of purposes. Among other things it seeks to:

- inform and educate the public by providing information;
- influence the public to attend religious, political or educational gatherings;
- improve health standards by informing the nation about outbreaks such as cholera, ebola and ways to control the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- provide entertainment, for example, watching television and listening to the radio;
- persuade people to buy products through advertising.

### ***Advantages of Mass Communication***

- A large number of recipients can be reached simultaneously.
- A message may reach its destination without a lot of obstruction.
- It is relatively fast.
- It can be advantageous to the public that is reached.

### ***Disadvantages of Mass Communication***

- Mass communication has no particular audience, as the message is meant to reach everyone in general.
- The recipient has very little chance to give feedback.
- It may present problems to the communicator in trying to structure a message for a specific mass media.



### **Self-Assessment 3**

1. Information has been transmitted to you through circulars from the district, region and head offices. What problems have you faced with this way of communication? Suggest ways of improving that communication.
2. Do you think that mass media could be used effectively in education to help students learn? Explain your response.

Possible answers to these questions are provided at the end of this unit.



## Summary

This unit discussed models of intrapersonal, interpersonal and mass communication. It established that the three models use the concept of communication, which starts with the communicator transmitting information through the medium of communication to the recipient. There is feedback in each model, although the extent and form of the feedback vary with each model. The models were linked to work situations in order to help you understand the communication process.



## Reflection

Think about how the three models of communication work in the communication process. Formulate your own model of communication.



## Unit Test

What similarities and differences have you found in the three models of communication that you studied in this unit?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.





## Suggested Answers

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### Self-Assessment 1

The strengths and weaknesses of the interpersonal communication system are outlined below.

#### Strengths

- Communication is face-to-face.
- Feedback is immediate.
- Messages can be clarified instantly.
- Subjects for discussion can be expanded and developed further.
- Both verbal and non-verbal signals are used.
- There is sensitivity to the feelings of others.

#### Weaknesses

- Interpersonal communication can be time consuming.
- It can lead to strained relations and quarrels, depending on the subject.
- It can lead to intimidation and harassment, depending on the relationship between the communicators.

### Self-Assessment 2

1. Interpersonal communication is more observable than intrapersonal communication because it occurs between two or more people. If it is verbal communication, you can listen to what is being said. If it is written communication, you can read the messages.
2. The answer to this activity depends on the circumstances. People behave differently in such situations, so there is no uniform behaviour. However, you may notice the following:
  - The student remains aloof and silent inside and outside the classroom.
  - The student may not participate in class and other school activities.
  - The student may appear to be gazing blankly.
  - The student may isolate himself or herself.
  - The student may cry.

### Self-Assessment 3

1. Some problems you could face when information is distributed by circulars are as follows:

- Some circulars get to the school after a deadline or just before the deadline, for example, vacancy circulars.
- Some centres may be omitted from the mailing list.
- Mail delivery at some schools is irregular.
- Information in the circular may be unclear.
- Interpretation of the same circular may differ from person to person.
- There is no one from whom to seek clarification.
- There is no immediate feedback from the communicator.

Below are some solutions that will address a number of the difficulties described above.

- Circulars should be sent in good time.
  - Mailing lists and addresses should be updated regularly.
  - Languages on circulars must be specific and clear.
  - Schools can work in clusters to help one another in the dissemination and interpretation of information.
  - Deadlines set in circulars must be realistic.
2. Mass communication is effective when it is used to provide information. Also, it is generally considered to be a one-way communication. Effective education occurs when there is an interaction between the teacher and the learner. This two-way communication allows the teacher to adjust the message to the needs of the students. Mass communication could be effective in education if it allows for this interaction to occur. Perhaps local tutors could help students as they listen to the radio or watch television.

## Unit Test

The similarities and differences among the three models of communication are provided below.

### Similarities

- All are concerned with the transmission of information.
- They all use a medium of communication.
- There is a recipient who receives the message and provides feedback.
- There is some form of feedback.
- There is verbal and non-verbal communication.

### Differences

- There is no immediate feedback in the mass communication model.

- Feedback is almost immediate in the interpersonal communication model.
- Mass communication targets a large audience, while the audience is restricted to the self in the intrapersonal model and to a relatively small number of receivers in the interpersonal model.
- The mass communication model uses numerous forms of communication media and interpersonal communication uses very few.
- The interpersonal model of communication relies mainly on face-to-face interaction. With the mass communication model, there is little or no face-to-face interaction.

# UNIT 6: Factors for Effective Communication

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## Introduction

In Unit 5, we discussed three models of communication. Each model had the following key communication elements:

- source
- transmission
- information
- receiver.

In this unit, you will learn how to communicate effectively. You will be able to apply this knowledge to other situations you encounter in your everyday life.

This unit will cover the following topics:

- body language
- oral communication
- written communication
- communication technology.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. List factors for effective communication.
2. Identify factors for effective communication in different situations.
3. Distinguish between human factors and content factors.



## Introductory Activity

Read the following story.

### ***A Matter of Urgency***

The head of your school storms into the staff room. He is visibly upset. He instructs all teachers to improve communication in the school as a matter of urgency.

He orders the heads of departments to report to him within a week stating what they will do in order to carry out his instruction.

A week later, the reports given to the head are as shown below:

- The head of the Languages Department has purchased 100 readers for pupils.
- The head of the Practicals Department has bought two computers and a fax machine.
- The senior master has introduced a rule which requires all people in the school to communicate in English at all times.

The head responded by threatening all three with dismissal for incompetence.

Why do you think there was all this misunderstanding? Was the instruction given by the school head clear? Did the department heads understand what they were supposed to do? Did the school head respond appropriately?

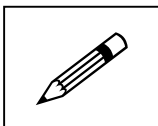
Would you want to be involved in this confusion? This unit aims to assist you in avoiding such situations. Effective communication is the key.



## Body Language

Body language plays an important role in effective verbal or oral communication. The whole body, or at least parts of it, must be involved in a communication process to reinforce the words. Van Schalkwyk (1992: 23) describes body language as “any movement of the body that communicates something”.

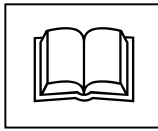
This quotation should remind you that communication uses the various organs such as the mouth, tongue and ears to send and receive messages. In addition, the eyes, facial muscles, hands, arms and, in some cases, the whole body can be involved in communicating the message. You will also appreciate the contributions made by the senses of touch, sight, hearing and smell.



## Self-Assessment 1

List three advantages of watching a person delivering a speech instead of reading the speech. How many of these are related to body language?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



### ***Messages Conveyed by Body Language***

When you speak to people, you are interested in a number of things. Some of them are:

- the message you want to convey,
- acceptance of the message by the audience, and
- acceptance of yourself by the audience.

In other words, you are looking for feedback. This feedback may not come in explicit statements but in body language. You can read messages of the following nature from your audience:

- interest
- belief
- liking
- respect.

Obviously, when your audience provides these types of feedback, you feel more encouraged, and your authority is enhanced.

You may also read messages that are not positive, such as:

- boredom
- disbelief
- dislike
- tension.

It is important to note that a message is positive or negative depending on the intentions of the sender. The audience, depending on their own experiences and their perceptions, may judge the message as positive or negative, even if the sender had a different intention. Communication is effective when the audience perceives the message as the sender intended.

### ***How Messages May Be Displayed by Body Language***

Messages can be sent or conveyed by specific body actions, as illustrated in the table below, which is adapted from Malcolm (1995). Note that a few of these items are culturally specific. For example, downcast eyes may not be seen as submission in some Asian countries, but rather as a sign of respect.

<b>Message</b>	<b>Body Action</b>
Interest	Facial expression Nodding Looking at speaker Leaning towards speaker Holding body still
Boredom	Inappropriately changing facial expressions Glancing away at other objects such as a clock on the wall Shuffling papers Frequent change of posture Yawning Sleeping
Belief	Nodding Relaxed mouth Responsive facial expression
Disbelief	Shaking of head Tight lips Widely opened eyes Deliberately touching the nose
Liking	Wide-open eyes Continuous eye contact Pleasant and responsive smile Posture turned to speaker
Dislike	Narrowed eyes Tense mouth Turned away posture
Tension	Forced posture Sweating
Aggression	Tense facial expression Glaring eyes Clenched fist
Submission	Downcast eyes Slow nodding Raised and lowered shoulders

Body language must always be read within the whole context of what is happening. To be able to do this, the speaker needs to make eye contact with the audience.

## Strategies for Successful Oral Presentations

Below are suggested strategies for conducting a successful oral presentation:

- Define the occasion. Know the context of your presentation.
- Define the aim and objective. If you are not clear about what you want to say, how will the audience know?
- Gather relevant materials. Most people are visually oriented. Bring some visual material.
- Structure the presentation. For example, you could use logical or chronological sequencing.
- Choose communication aids and methods that are appropriate for the content and the audience.
- Produce speaker's notes. You may write a complete speech or just note the key words.
- Rehearse the presentation several times so that you will feel confident in front of the audience.
- Deal with questions politely and effectively. Prior to the presentation, think about some of the questions you might be asked and prepare answers for them.

You are advised, however, to remember that following the above steps does not guarantee successful communication on its own. Whenever possible, in the planning stage, you need to get some idea about the following:

- the room in which the presentation will be held,
- heating and ventilation conditions and controls,
- lighting level and the location of the controls,
- noise levels within and external to the room,
- possible distractions that may be caused by other events,
- equipment that you can use, and
- furniture.

### **Successful Strategies for Classroom Presentations**

The suggestions provided in the previous section apply to presentations made anywhere and to a variety of audiences. As a teacher, you may need to make presentations to other teachers or the community. However, the place in which you make most of your presentations is within the classroom. You could use the list below to evaluate yourself or other teachers. The list, developed by C. Wright (1987: 1-96) is used in at least 12 countries by students who evaluate teachers on their teaching.



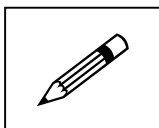
## Student Questionnaire: Instructor Evaluation

	Poor			Excellent	
	1	2	3	4	5
A. Teaching Skills:					
1. Arouses interest, provides motivation	!	!	!	!	!
2. Holds the class's attention	!	!	!	!	!
3. Gives clear and simple instructions	!	!	!	!	!
4. Uses appropriate examples/illustrations	!	!	!	!	!
5. Checks understanding	!	!	!	!	!
6. Asks a variety of questions	!	!	!	!	!
7. Distributes questions throughout class	!	!	!	!	!
8. Asks questions suitable to topic under discussion	!	!	!	!	!
9. Develops sequence of questions	!	!	!	!	!
10. Encourages analytical and critical thinking	!	!	!	!	!
11. Encourages discussion	!	!	!	!	!
12. Listens to students' responses and adjusts instruction accordingly	!	!	!	!	!
13. Provides positive feedback	!	!	!	!	!
14. Organises instruction	!	!	!	!	!
15. Paces instruction appropriately	!	!	!	!	!
16. Demonstrates a thorough knowledge of subject matter	!	!	!	!	!
B. Communication Skills:					
17. Command of English	!	!	!	!	!
18. Clarity of speech	!	!	!	!	!
19. Appropriateness of language	!	!	!	!	!
20. Varied tone and pace of voice	!	!	!	!	!
21. Audibility	!	!	!	!	!
22. Legible printing/handwriting	!	!	!	!	!
C. Instructional Aids:					
23. Non-verbal communication	!	!	!	!	!
24. A variety of instructional aids are used	!	!	!	!	!
25. The instructional aids are used appropriately	!	!	!	!	!
26. The instructional aids are suitable for the tasks being taught	!	!	!	!	!
D. Relationship with Students:					
27. Aware of individual differences and needs	!	!	!	!	!
28. Gives students an opportunity to express their opinions	!	!	!	!	!
29. Encourages students to interact	!	!	!	!	!
30. Values and gains the respect of students	!	!	!	!	!
E. Evaluation:					
31. Evaluation procedures are fair—test only what is taught	!	!	!	!	!
32. Tests and assignments are returned promptly to students	!	!	!	!	!
33. Comments on returned assignments and tests are useful	!	!	!	!	!

F. Miscellaneous:

34. Use this space for additional comments.

35. Identify three areas to be improved before the next evaluation.



## Self-Assessment 2

A national newspaper shows pictures taken at the opening of a Parliament session. On the front page are six ministers who have fallen asleep. The caption at the bottom of this picture is, “Barely 15 minutes after the President had started his speech, these men were caught taking a snooze.” From your knowledge of oral communication gained in this unit, list five possible reasons for this situation.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Written Communication

Most authors agree that spoken language is much older than the written form. The fact that there are societies that have not developed the written form of their languages suggests that the written form is meant for fewer purposes than the oral form.

In this unit, we do not debate the historical aspects of written and spoken language. What you will find useful is the fact that written language is more appropriate for formal communication. This includes the acquisition of formal education.

### ***Factors to Consider in Written Communication***

- Have a clear objective.
- Draft headings.
- Write easy parts first.
- Produce a rough draft.
- Decide on charts, pictures and graphs to be included.
- Seek views of others.
- Check the facts, figures and details.

Check the draft of your written document for:

- spelling,
- punctuation,
- correct choice of words,

- grammar, and
- page numbering.

In written communication, you should avoid:

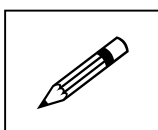
- unnecessary detail,
- long, winding complex sentences, and
- leaving things to chance.

***Factors to Consider in Grading Students' Written Assignments***

The factors listed above apply to all written communication, whether it is a letter sent to your school head or a circular to your pupils' parents. The same guidelines also apply to student assignments. Those of you who are teaching junior secondary students may want to adapt the checklist (Wright, 1987: 3-25) for your use. As you grade a student's assignment, you complete the checklist below with your comments. Return both the assignment and the checklist to the student.

## Assignment Checklist

GENERAL COMMENTS	Improvement		
	Needed	OK	Excellent
A rating for each comment given below			
Organisation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– topic is well defined</li><li>– the ideas are presented in a logical sequence</li><li>– a link is provided between each idea</li><li>– the conclusions are appropriate</li><li>– ideas are separated into paragraphs</li></ul>			
Paragraphs			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– topic sentence is appealing or introduces the subject matter appropriately</li><li>– your ideas are developed</li><li>– concluding sentence(s) wrap up the paragraph</li></ul>			
Sentence Structure			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– various sentence structures are used</li><li>– the meanings of the sentences are clear</li></ul>			
Information			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– has relevance to your topic</li><li>– is up to date</li><li>– about the right amount of material is covered</li></ul>			
Mechanics			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– spelling</li><li>– punctuation</li><li>– grammar</li></ul>			



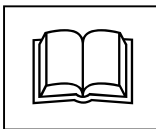
### Self-Assessment 3

Read the following characteristics and decide whether each describes speech or writing. An example is provided for you.

- usually permanent
- often more formal
- volume and speed are important
- sentences and paragraphs are important
- has lower status
- has higher status
- usually uses standard form
- often more informal
- users can get immediate response
- uses gestures to aid communication
- conveyed by sound
- uses marks on a page
- face-to-face
- sender and receiver are usually apart.

<b><i>Speech</i></b>	<b><i>Writing</i></b>
• volume and speed are important	• usually permanent
•	•
•	•

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## **Communication Technology**

Although the use of computers, videocassette recorders, fax and telephone could have been rare in schools in the 1980's, the present situation in many schools and even homes makes it clear that these are now part of our society. It is therefore necessary to consider them as communication tools that can be used in schools.

### ***Use of Telephone***

When using the telephone, you need to know how to:

- make a call,
- receive a call,
- transfer a call, and
- take a message.

When using the telephone, you should:

- Sound friendly and warm.
- Note the name of the caller and other relevant details.

- Call back if the caller is cut off.
- Identify yourself when making a call.
- Take great care when transferring a call.
- Pass messages promptly and accurately.
- Keep abreast with the developments in telephone technology. Wireless phones are now available. Some of them can connect you directly to the Internet!

Things to avoid when using the telephone:

- speaking too loudly or too softly
- over-reacting to the caller's tone or voice
- allowing the phone to ring for too long
- starting a second conversation while on the telephone
- leaving messages undispatched
- allowing unexplained silence during a call
- talking too long.



#### **Self-Assessment 4**

List similarities and differences between a telephone call and a face-to-face conversation.

Possible answers to this activity are given at the end of the unit.



#### **Communication and Language Skills**

By now, you must have realised that oral communication, written communication and the use of the telephone require careful application of one or more of the basic skills of:

- writing,
- speaking,
- listening, and
- reading.

It is also clear that some of the communication tasks make more use of some skills while drawing from the other skills for support.



#### **Reflection**

Think of a particular speaker you enjoyed listening to. Can you identify the things about the person, content and presentation that appealed to you? How will you use the information presented in this module to improve your communication skills in the classroom?



## Summary

This unit:

- introduced you to factors involved in effective communication,
- outlined how to present and write effectively, and
- explained how to use the telephone appropriately.

We hope that it has enabled you to:

- understand your audience better,
- accomplish your tasks more easily, and
- apply the knowledge gained to solve your communication problems.



## Unit Test

Imagine that you are requested to address a group of students on the importance of communication. Using the insights gained from this unit, show how you will use each of the four language skills you have studied (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

Possible answers to this test are provided at the end of this unit.



## Suggested Answers

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### Introductory Activity

Below are just a few of the possible answers to the introductory activity.

- There was a lot of confusion because the school head did not like what the department heads had done, probably because he expected them to do something else.
- The instruction given by the school head was too general or vague. He did not explain why he wanted people to improve communication and what he expected. He did not provide any guidelines.
- The department heads did not appear to understand the intent of the school head's instructions. They did not seek clarification at the time the instructions were given or before they made their purchases.
- The school head did not respond appropriately, as he did not ask the heads why they made the purchases that they did and how their purchases would improve communication.

### Self-Assessment 1

Below are some of the advantages of watching a person deliver a speech.

- The audience can give immediate feedback.
- Speakers and listeners can make eye contact.
- The speakers' gestures can provide additional information.
- The speaker and the audience can assess each other's emotional response.
- Listeners can ask questions for clarification.
- The speaker does not have to be concerned about spelling or punctuation.
- Informal speeches are more personal than most written communications.

Of the above, three are directly related to body language.

### Self-Assessment 2

The ministers may have fallen asleep because:

- the ventilation was inadequate,
- the speech was not enthusiastically presented,
- the presentation was beyond their comprehension,
- the content was uninspiring,



- the content was already known,
- the presentation was too fast, and/or
- they disliked the presenter.

### Self-Assessment 3

<b><i>Speech</i></b>	<b><i>Writing</i></b>
• volume and speed are important	• usually permanent
• has lower status	• often more formal
• often more informal	• sentences and paragraphs are important
• users can get an immediate response	• has higher status
• uses gestures to aid communication	• usually uses standard form
• conveyed by sound	• uses marks on a page
• face to face	• senders and receivers are usually apart

### Self-Assessment 4

Similarities between a telephone call and face-to-face conversation:

- use of voice
- immediate feedback
- can adjust content
- can tell mood of speaker
- not hindered by spelling
- volume and length are important.

When you use a telephone, there is no face-to-face contact, and you are unable to read body language.

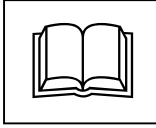
### Unit Test

During the presentation, you could make use of the following four language skills:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Speaking  | • main means of presentation   |
| Reading   | • may read a written paper or write notes and read them  |
| Listening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to questions during presentation</li> <li>• to own voice in presentation</li> <li>• for other distracting noises</li> </ul> |
| Writing   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• notes for presentation</li> <li>• on charts or board</li> </ul>   |

# UNIT 7: Barriers to Effective Communication

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## Introduction

From reading Unit 4 on the purpose of communication, you should have realised that communication is an effective tool in your work. Maintaining effective communication means that you should be able to identify those factors that hinder communication. Therefore, this unit focuses on the barriers to effective communication.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define the word 'barrier'.
2. Identify the barriers to effective communication.
3. Discuss how the barriers affect communication.
4. Identify the results of communication breakdown.

## Definition of Barrier

You have already looked at the concept of communication in Unit 1. Now you need to have an understanding of the barriers to communication. Let us consider the following definitions of the word 'barrier':

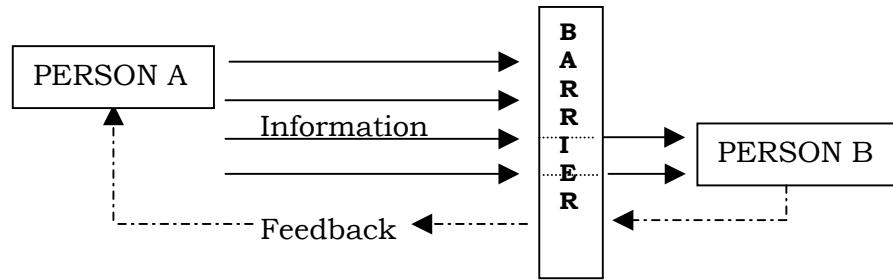
Anything that prevents people from being together or understanding each other  
(Procter, 1997: 101)

Something immaterial that separates or prevents or hinders communication, progress, etc. (*Longman Dictionary of English*, 1984: 117)

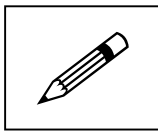
A thing that makes communication or good relationships between people difficult or impossible (Crowther, 1995: 84)

What is common in these definitions is that they indicate a lack of understanding, progress and good relationships between people. Thus, **barrier** refers to something that prevents or makes communication between people difficult or impossible.

A barrier to communication between two people can be illustrated as follows:



As illustrated in this diagram, there is very little information being received by person B. As a result, there is very little feedback from person B to person A. Later, when you look at communication in the classroom, this information will be helpful.



### Self-Assessment 1

From your understanding of the term ‘barrier’, suggest at least two words that could be used to fill in the blank in the following sentence:

A barrier is anything that \_\_\_\_\_ communication and understanding.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



### Categories of Communication Barriers

From your experience, you may have realised that you are familiar with some of the barriers to communication. We will discuss four categories of communication barriers listed below:

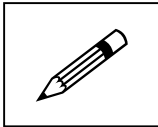
- cultural
- external
- internal
- verbal.

#### **Cultural Barriers**

In some cases, communication fails because of cultural differences. This is caused by some of the following factors:

- Lack of shared code system. Code systems are different for different communities. For example, a nod in one community may not mean a ‘yes’ as it might in other communities.
- Differences between beliefs and behaviour. Different cultures have different beliefs and behaviours. In some cultures, for example, it is considered rude for children to question their parents or look an elder straight in the eye when being reprimanded.

- Lack of understanding of the deeper meaning and idioms of other cultures.
- Ethnocentrism. This exists when one considers one's culture and habits as better than those of other people.
- Generalization. This occurs when you make unreasonable assumptions about groups of people.
- Stereotyping. This is an oversimplified and one-sided view of other people and their culture.



## Self-Assessment 2

Discuss how ethnocentrism and stereotyping are barriers to effective communication.

Possible answers to this activity are given at the end of this unit.



## External Communication Barriers

External barriers to effective communication include the following:

- Noisy or distracting environment. This applies particularly in cases where there is face-to-face or telephone communication.
- Physical appearance of written information. Information that is not clearly presented in terms of layout, handwriting and arrangement of ideas may be difficult to follow.
- Physical appearance of the sender. In face-to-face situations, the recipient of the information may be influenced negatively by the physical appearance of the sender. Of course, it is also possible that the appearance could positively influence the recipient.
- Use of inappropriate method for sending information. It is important to decide when to write or when to send information verbally. Sending information by one method instead of the appropriate one may lead to communication breakdown.
- Poor planning and timing.
- Conflicting priorities. For example, a leader may not have set goals and objectives in collaboration with other members of staff. They will not know what is expected of them in terms of organisational priorities.
- Power differences. Due to their positions, a supervisor and a supervisee may view a situation differently.
- Poor listening skills of both the sender and the receiver. This occurs in face-to-face and telephone communication when the two parties do not listen closely to each other. They do not have a mutual understanding of each other's needs.

### **Internal Communication Barriers**

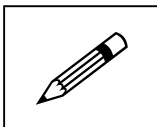
These communication barriers refer to what goes on in a person's mind. They include:

- Lack of interest or knowledge. This occurs when the sender or recipient or both are not interested or have little or no knowledge about the subject being discussed.
- Personality problems between the sender and the receiver of information. When both parties have personality differences, whatever they try to communicate with each other is likely to be influenced by their differences.
- Emotions of both the sender and the receiver. If both the sender and receiver of information are not in good emotional moods, then communication between the two is adversely affected.
- Receiver's internal distractions. The person receiving the information might have her or his own problems. These problems may not be associated with the sender. These distractions have an effect on receiving and processing information.

### **Verbal Communication Barriers**

These barriers are created by oral transmission of information. They include:

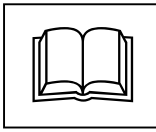
- Language. The inappropriate use of words and the tone of the language may be barriers to communication.
- Unclear message. In this situation, the receiver is not clear about what the sender of information is attempting to communicate.
- Conflicting messages. A number of messages with different kinds of information may be sent. Information in the messages may be significantly different, yet the subject matter is the same.
- Disorganised messages. The information being transmitted may be so mixed up that it is difficult to follow.
- Information overload. This frequently occurs when there is a lot of unnecessary detail included in a message.
- Serial distortion. This distortion occurs when the meaning of the original information is changed. This usually happens in cases where verbal information passes through a number of people.



### **Self-Assessment 3**

Identify internal, external, verbal and cultural communication barriers that can affect your work in the school.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Results of Communication Breakdown

It is important that we examine what normally happens when there is a communication breakdown. The term **communication breakdown** refers to a situation in which there is no clear understanding of the message being transmitted. Some of the results of communication breakdown are:

- frustration for both the sender and the receiver of information;
- demotivation of both parties;
- conflict, both physical and verbal;
- distortion of information; and
- failure to achieve goals.



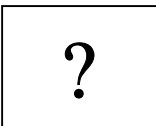
## Summary

This unit defined the word 'barrier' in relation to communication. The factors that hinder effective communication and how these can have a negative effect on your work were also discussed, as well as the results of communication breakdown. You should now be ready to discuss ways of overcoming them.



## Reflection

Can you identify barriers to effective communication at your school? How could you reduce or eliminate these barriers?



## Unit Test

What are the common aspects of the four categories of communication barriers?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.



## Suggested Answers

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### Self-Assessment 1

The following words could be used to describe the effect of barriers on communication and understanding:

- prevents
- stops
- hinders
- disturbs.

Other answers are possible.

### Self-Assessment 2

- Ethnocentrism – Looking down upon other people's culture can lead to communication breakdown. In this case, it is unlikely that the message received from one culture will be viewed to being as valuable as the message from one's own culture.
- Stereotyping – A one-sided view of other people's culture can result in communication breakdown and conflict. Stereotyping does not allow one to recognise that everyone is an individual with individual characteristics. Therefore, a message may not be designed for the individual but for a large group whose members supposedly share the same emotions and thought processes.

### Self-Assessment 3

There are many possible responses for this question. Below are some possible communication barriers that can affect work in the school.

• Internal	- emotions that are inappropriate in classroom interactions
• External	- poor planning and time management
• Verbal	- inappropriate use of words and tone of language
• Cultural	- differences in culture, hence different interpretation of people's behaviour

## Unit Test

Below are some of the common aspects of communication barriers.

- They prevent people from understanding each other.
- They may be caused by poor planning or timing.
- They may be cultural, external, internal or verbal.
- They may result from lack of interest on the part of the speaker or audience.



# UNIT 8: Strategies for Language Learning

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## Introduction

In Unit 7, we examined some barriers to effective communication. We established that a barrier stands in the way of information between the source and the receiver. This results in understanding being reduced or totally blocked. This unit will answer the question “How can I overcome some of the barriers experienced by students who are learning a language, so that they can use it to communicate clearly?”

Unit 8 describes strategies that people commonly use for learning a language. You will observe that not all the strategies are successful! Children who are using some of these strategies often make certain types of errors in speaking or writing, particularly if they are learning a language that is different from the language they speak at home.

This unit explains why your students may be making errors in language classes. It suggests how you can help them to use more effective language learning strategies, and to avoid applying language ‘rules’ inappropriately.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Identify strategies for language learning.
2. Describe each type of strategy and explain why it is or is not successful.
3. Help students overcome common errors in learning a second language.

## Types of Strategies

While several different kinds of communication barriers were mentioned in Unit 7, this unit focuses on barriers which are related to language. Children and adults use a number of strategies for overcoming barriers related to language learning. They include:

- transfer,
- over-generalisation,
- translation,
- rephrasing, and
- code-switching.

Remember that there are other strategies, including the proper use of gestures and body language, which are equally important and worth considering.

## Language Transfer

Many African countries use two or more languages. These languages are further designated as 'official' and 'national'. People in countries where this phenomenon exists will generally learn two languages. Children begin by learning the language spoken at home. This is called **mother tongue** or **first language** (L1). The language learned later is called the **second language** (L2).

The process of learning the two languages is important for the understanding of the concept of transfer. This unit looks basically at the acquisition of L2. The learning of L1 is best explained by the concept of universal grammar, which states that a child has an inherited ability to learn his or her mother tongue. This means that most children are born with the capability to learn the mother tongue. Second language learning comes later, but it occurs in the same way as L1 learning.

Transfer refers to the way the learner uses the established language to learn the second language. Croft (1980: 145) defines **transfer** in the following way:

In its simplest form, transfer refers to the hypothesis that the learning of a new task is either facilitated or impeded by the previous learning of another task.

### **How Does Transfer Show Itself?**

You should be able to detect that an error in sentence construction is due to transfer. Unfortunately, this is usually followed by dismissing the student's effort as being wrong. One such common error is the repetition of the subject in English constructions.

Look at this example:

- The person he is singing. (The person is singing.)
- The person she is singing. (The person is singing.)

We can leave out the subject 'The person' and still have a complete sentence, and we can leave out the pronoun 'he' or 'she' and still have a complete sentence.

This error is a result of a systematic application of L1.

Look at the following sentences from the languages that are shown. Add your own if your L1 is not included:

Chibemba:	Umuntu /a/ le imba
Ikalanga :	Nthu/u/ no mba
Oshi Kwanyama:	Ontu/ ta / imbi
Silozi:	Mutu/wa/opela
Isi Ndebele:	Umuntu/ u/yahlabela
Chi Nyanja:	Muntu/a/yimba
Chishona:	Munhu/a/noimba
Setswana :	Motho/oa /opela
Isixhosa:	Umuntu/u/yacula
Isizulu:	Umuntu/u/yahlabelela
Chitonga:	Muntu/u/la imba

To help our discussion, the sentences have been divided into three parts. What you will notice is:

- The subject word is at the beginning for all the languages.
- The second segment in all the sentences refers to 'person'.
- The second segment and the third will give you a sentence.

Take the sentence in English, and divide it into segments where the subject word is on its own. The result is:

The person /he/ is singing.

- You should now realise that the repetition of the subject is due to the influence of L1.
- The repetition is due to an attempt to transfer a structure from L1.
- The ability to apply the L1 rule to the new situation is a positive device.
- The fault in the English sentence should be called an error and not a mistake.
- The error is a stage in the development from L1 to L2.
- Depending on the stage, the error can be an intelligent application of the language rules the L1 speaker has already learned.

As a teacher, you are now able to help your students better because you know where this construction comes from. In order to help your pupils whenever these errors occur, you will need to:

- Identify the problem or error.
- Identify the possible source that has been transferred. It will help you to have some basic knowledge of your students' L1, especially if they are at the early stage of acquiring L2.

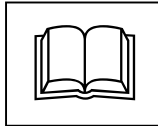
- Identify the strategy the student has used.
- Use your knowledge of language transfer to assist the student.



### Self-Assessment 1

Having identified some errors of speech made by your class, what steps could you follow to assist your students?

Possible answers to this question are given at the end of this unit.



### Over-Generalisation

Tylor (1974, 1975) suggests that when students are faced with problems in the language they are learning, they will learn the rule that is most general in that language. Then they will over-generalise or apply it everywhere.

You need to be clear about the difference between the concept of transfer discussed earlier and over-generalisation. Transfer involves two languages, while over-generalisation involves the target language only. Transfer tries to use rules in L1 to apply to L2, while over-generalisation uses rules in L2 to apply to L2.

#### **Examples of Over-Generalising**

Look at the way we form questions in English. There are basically two ways:

- inversion of subject and auxiliary verbs, such as:
 

1	2		2	1
He	is going to town	-	Is	he going to town?

1	2		2	1
Mary	is here	-	Is	Mary here?
- Inserting a form of the verb 'to do'

It is in the use of 'do' that many students have problems. Look at the following sentences, which are typical of errors displayed by learners of English as a second language.

- Does Mary swims well?
- Did he talked to you?
- Does he talked with you?

When a teacher sees such errors in a student's work, it is helpful to understand that the student has taken the general rule of the target language and simplified it by applying it to all situations. There is an effort to keep the main verb in either the past or present regardless of 'do'.

Similarly, you will meet such sentences as:

- He singed. (He sang.)
- She flied to Durban. (She flew to Durban.)
- She cutted the cake. (She cut the cake.)

Remember that these show the students' efforts to apply the general rule of past tense to English verbs by adding 'ed' to the verb. Children whose first language is English also make this type of error.



## Reflection

Think of the number of times you have corrected your students' errors without relating them to L1 influence.



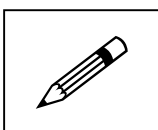
## Translation

Translation operates in two ways. There is good translation and there is bad translation. Good translation captures the meaning in one language and presents the same meaning in the other language, and it does this in a way that is acceptable and linguistically correct.

Bad translation occurs where the translation focuses on isolated words or phrases instead of the whole meaning. The result is that the expressions in the two languages are different in meaning. Usually the translated version is unacceptable even in form. For example, look at the statement:

- I laughed until I died.

The sentence is grammatically correct but meaningless in English. Yet for many L1 speakers in Africa, the idiom from which it is translated is an acceptable expression.



## Self-Assessment 2

Distinguish between good and bad translations. What do they have in common?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.



## Rephrasing

Rephrasing differs from all the strategies discussed in this unit in that:

- It is a strategy to solve a vocabulary problem.
- It is usually associated with insufficient time given for handling a communication situation.
- It almost always shows itself in speech.

- It does not always lead to a loss of meaning.
- It can be a longer way of expressing an idea.

### **Examples of Rephrasing**

Consider the situation below.

You have asked your class to give unprepared speeches about their parents. One pupil, whose mother is a nurse, gives you the following construction during her speech: “My mother works in the ....My mother works with doctors who operate on people. My mother works in the place where people are operated on.”

Now, let us examine what this student has done.

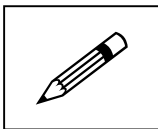
- She could not complete her sentence in the first instance because the word she needed was not readily available in her vocabulary.
- Either she had no time or she was unable to recall the word ‘hospital’.
- The pause was an appeal for assistance which did not come.
- She then reconstructed the sentence and replaced the unavailable vocabulary item with a descriptive clause.

The result of the statement is that you understand exactly what was intended even without the one word. In this example, the student rephrased the idea that the missing word carried.

There are times when a whole sentence is rephrased, such as:

- I was really....
- It made me sick.

In this case, you do not know what word or idea was intended in the first sentence. The second sentence is a rephrase of the first, but you cannot be sure that the meaning is the same. In addition, the flow of ideas is affected.



### **Self-Assessment 3**

You have identified errors of:

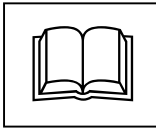
- transfer,
- over-generalisation, and
- rephrasing.

You have the following strategies to assist your students. Which strategy would you use to help students overcome each of the three errors listed above?

- Ask pupils to rewrite exercises until they identify the correct way on their own.

- Encourage the use of a dictionary and a lot of reading of L2 literature.
- Make use of L1 knowledge to explain L2 rules.
- Demonstrate that L2 rules cannot be applied to all L2 situations.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



## Code-Switching

What is code-switching? Examples are provided in the following paragraphs:

You are sitting on a long bench outside the headmaster's office where you have been called for a job interview. Two other people join you on the bench for the same interview. You know them very well, and you start chatting in your L1.

When the headmaster comes down the corridor towards you, you all start conversing in English.

OR

As you sit on the bench, you are conversing in your L1. When the janitor approaches to carry out his cleaning duties, then you switch your conversation from L1 to English.

This example shows you what **code-switching** is. It is a device whereby a person deliberately changes from one language to another more for social reasons than because of language difficulty.

In the first situation above, the change from L1 to English could be an attempt to create an impression on the head so that the chances of success in the interview improve.

In the second example, switching from L1 to English when the janitor was close may have been a device to keep your conversation private.

What have we learned about code-switching?

- It involves changing from one language to another at will.
- It does not necessarily suggest that one is more competent in any one of the languages. A street beggar will switch to any language that might help appeal to a potential donor.

- It is used basically to obtain advantages anticipated by the speaker.



## Summary

This unit has explained a number of strategies that people commonly use to learn languages. It also suggested how teachers can overcome the problems associated with some of these strategies.

- Transfer occurs at the level of sentence patterns. It involves using the forms of L1 to create those of L2.
- Over-generalisation occurs when the knowledge the learner has of L1 does not cover all the areas of L2. The limited knowledge is then applied to areas where it is not appropriate.
- Translation can be good or bad. Good translation captures the meaning in one language and presents the same meaning in another language so that the translation is linguistically correct.
- Rephrasing occurs when a learner cannot remember a word or makes a statement that is unclear.
- Code-switching is used basically for the convenience of the speaker.

Communication strategies that were not discussed include the use of visual and audio material and body language.

Remember that any device you use to overcome a barrier is a strategy, but all strategies are not equally effective.



## Unit Test

What do you understand by each of the following terms?

- L1
- L2
- Rephrase
- Code-switching
- Transfer

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.





## Suggested Answers

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### Self-Assessment 1

After noticing that there are errors made by pupils, you could:

- identify the error;
- identify the source of the error;
- check or verify the rules and forms of the source, which is usually the pupils' L1;
- work out an appropriate method to correct the error; and
- apply the method.

### Self-Assessment 2

The differences and similarities between good and bad translation:

- In a bad translation, the meaning is lost.
- In a good translation, the meaning is clear.
- Both good and bad translations involve L1 and L2.

### Self-Assessment 3

- Transfer. Make use of L1 knowledge to explain L2 rules.
- Over-generalisation. Demonstrate that L2 rules cannot be applied to all L2 situations.
- Rephrasing. Encourage the use of a dictionary and a lot of general reading in L2.

## Unit Test

L1

- Mother tongue
- Language learned at birth
- Language learned at home
- Language learned first.

L2

- Language other than L1
- Language acquired or learned after another language has been established.

Rephrase

- Use different words to express an idea, often due to a vocabulary problem.

### Code-switching

- Changing from one language to another, generally for convenience.

### Transfer

- Applying the knowledge of L1 and its grammatical structure to an L2 situation.

## Module Test

1. Explain the relationship between language and communication.
2. Draw and label a model of the communication process. Indicate where barriers may affect communication and describe at least four barriers to effective communication.
3. Describe at least seven ways that you can make communication effective.
4. Give two advantages and disadvantages of each of the following types of communication:
  - a. oral/spoken
  - b. written
  - c. vertical
5. If you were to prepare and give instructions to your students, what key components would you have at the back of your mind?
6. How can body language be classified as positive or negative? Give at least two examples to strengthen your argument.
7. What are the similarities and differences in the three types of messages: informative, persuasive and entertainment?
8. Under what conditions would it be best to use an interpersonal communication model rather than a mass communication model?
9. Contrast information conveyed through word of mouth with information conveyed in written form.
10. Discuss factors that can lead to communication breakdown. Why it is important to try to overcome barriers to communication?
11. How does some knowledge of your students' L1 assist you in understanding and solving their problems?
12. "Language is assessed in terms of behavioural outcomes." Explain this statement with regard to oral, writing, reading and listening tests in language.

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